



# Affordable Housing Trusts

## How Affordable Housing Trusts Work

A municipal Affordable Housing Trust can help create and preserve affordable housing by directing funds to locally approved projects or programs. Projects such as the construction of new housing units can be funded by an Affordable Housing Trust. An Affordable Housing Trust can also direct funds to programs such as rental assistance, first-time homebuyer programs, and housing rehabilitation. With an Affordable Housing Trust, a municipality dedicates funds for affordable housing outside of the general municipal budget. A major benefit of an Affordable Housing Trust is the ability to move quickly and efficiently when housing opportunities arise. The Community Preservation Act is the most common source of funds for an Affordable Housing Trust. However, an Affordable Housing Trust Fund can be backed by other sources. These include inclusionary zoning payments, developer fees, municipal general funds, tax title sales, cell tower lease payments, and private donations.

## Examples of Affordable Housing Trusts in Massachusetts

In Berkshire County, the communities of Great Barrington, Lenox, and Williamstown have active Affordable Housing Trusts. Across the commonwealth, over 120 cities and towns have established an Affordable Housing Trust.

## How to Implement an Affordable Housing Trust

An Affordable Housing Trust is part of municipal government and is established through town meeting or city council vote. Prior to passage at city council or town meeting, a task force could be created to investigate how best to establish the trust. This task force would review the housing needs and goals of the community and how the bylaw or ordinance could be written to best reflect the community's goals. Once established by the city council or town meeting, the members of the trust board are appointed by the chief executive officer.

## Example Projects

- New Construction of Affordable Housing
- Advocacy for Affordable Housing
- Small Repair Programs
- Rental Assistance
- Buy Down Programs
- Preserve Properties with Expiring Affordability Restrictions
- First Time Homebuyer Programs
- Redevelopment of Municipal Land for Housing
- Subsidizing Affordable Units within Housing Developments

### BRPC PROGRAM

Community Planning Program  
[berkshireplanning.org/programs](http://berkshireplanning.org/programs)

### LOCAL EXAMPLES

Great Barrington  
[www.gbhousing.org](http://www.gbhousing.org)

Lenox  
[www.townoflenox.com](http://www.townoflenox.com)

Williamstown

## Affordable Housing Trusts in Berkshire County

### Great Barrington

The Great Barrington Affordable Housing Trust offers emergency rental assistance and down payment assistance programs for first-time homebuyers. The funding for the Trust comes largely through the Community Preservation Act. Funding has also been used for land acquisition and predevelopment of an affordable housing site.

### Lenox



*Through their buydown program, this home in Lenox was rehabilitated for a first-time homebuyer.*

a buy-down program, two homes were purchased and will be sold as deed-restricted affordable homes to first time homebuyers.

The Lenox Affordable Housing Trust offers emergency rental assistance and first-time homebuyer assistance. The rental assistance program assisted fifteen households during the pandemic. Funding has come from the Community Preservation Act and general fund appropriations at town meeting. With an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw, the AHT works with developers to create additional affordable units. Through

### Williamstown



*This new home in Williamstown was constructed with funds from the Affordable Housing Trust, in cooperation with Habitat for Humanity.*

development provided forty families with housing. The Affordable Housing Trust continued creating units with 330 Cole Avenue, an affordable housing development of 41 units. Following the completion of a detailed report on housing needs in the town, the Trust moved forward with creating additional housing, such as single-family homes in cooperation with Habitat for Humanity. In addition to the construction of new housing, the Williamstown Affordable Housing Trust has provided homebuyer assistance, consisting of grants up to \$15,000, for down payment and/or closing costs. During the pandemic, grants of up to \$10,000 were available for rental assistance. While initial funding for the Affordable Housing Trust came directly from town funds, funding is now provided through the Community Preservation Act.

The Williamstown Affordable Housing Trust was created after Hurricane Irene, when two hundred Williamstown residents were displaced due to the storm damage. Town meeting chose to provide \$400,000 to assist with the creation of new affordable housing. With this funding, Highland Woods rental housing was developed by the Berkshire Housing Development Corporation. This new

## Resources

- The Massachusetts Housing Partnership guidebook, [Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Operations Manual](#), is a very helpful document with more detailed information about starting an Affordable Housing Trust
- The Massachusetts Housing Partnership has also developed a "Housing Toolbox", available at [housingtoolbox.org](http://housingtoolbox.org)
- Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) [www.chapa.org](http://www.chapa.org)
- Community Preservation Coalition (CPA funding info) [communitypreservation.org](http://communitypreservation.org)